

Cold weather shelter will start operating in January

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

In 11 days, the Sisters Cold Weather Shelter will open its doors to those needing to come in out of the cold. Registration begins at 6 p.m. on January 1, 2017, at Westside Church, 442 Trinity Way, between Highway 242 and McKinney Butte Road.

The shelter will be open from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. every night the temperature is forecast to be 32 degrees or lower. Westside is serving as the host facility for the shelter for the month of January. Sisters Community Church has offered their facilities for the month of February. As of this time, no organization has yet come forward for March.

Sign-ups for volunteer shifts began at an informational meeting and training held on December 12 for people interested in becoming involved.

“I think sign-ups went well, but we still have many gaps. We definitely need more people to sign up for the midnight to 7 a.m. shift,” said co-chairman Lois Kaping. “Our schedule will be available online and people can find out current information by checking out the Sisters Cold Weather Shelter

Facebook page if they are interested in volunteering in the shelter.”

The sign-up is available at <https://signup.com/group/306456416071>. Or, sign up on Facebook.

There are many other services and goods that are needed, and people who can't work in the shelter can help in other ways like providing and/or cooking food, providing cleaning services, or making donations of items or money. A bank account is currently being established and the group plans to secure its 501(c)(3) classification as a nonprofit so that donations will be tax-deductible.

Kaping was able to secure 12 surplus mattresses from the Deschutes County Jail.

“I've had a great response for the supply list and people have committed to some of the more significant items (bedding). For example, Mary Tomjack from Heartwarmers is donating all 12 blankets,” she said.

The shelter's current needs include: electric tea kettle; 12 new pillows; plastic filing box for registration forms and community resources information; spray bottles with disinfectant; laundry soap, bleach, dryer sheets; metal bucket (for cigarette butts);

board games and DVDs; personal hygiene items (toothbrush, toothpaste, razors, shaving cream, hygiene products); coffee, instant oatmeal, cup of noodles, and protein/granola bars; and cell phones with minutes.

Cash donations are always welcome for operating costs like laundry and cell phone minutes.

At the December 12 meeting, men from Bend's Shepherd's House and the Redmond Cold Weather Shelter described a typical night at the shelter, gave pointers on how to approach and interact with the shelter guests, and general operating procedures for the shelter.

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— Jerry Kaping

“I thought the turnout was incredible. We had 60 people, 44 of whom filled out

criminal background check papers,” Kaping said. All volunteers must go through a criminal background check by the Oregon State Police. She was particularly pleased with the way the people involved are working together.

“The collaborative nature of the SCWS is very exciting to watch. All parties involved are positive and helpful. We have a great mix of both civic and religious organizations along with individuals. Everyone seems to be jumping in to offer whatever help they can,” Kaping said.

There will be a phone number for guests to call after 2 p.m. seven days a week to listen to a recording regarding whether or not the shelter will be open that evening. Doors will open at 6 p.m. and guests have four hours to get settled, have something to drink and eat, socialize, read, and play games.

Lights are dimmed at 10 p.m. and quiet is maintained until 6 a.m. Guests are expected to be out of the facility by 7 a.m., taking with them whatever they came in with the previous evening.

Men and women guests sleep in separate areas of the available space. Families with children are provided a separate room but are required

to have the door open.

The first time a guest comes to the shelter, they are asked to fill out a registration form on which they provide basic information, an emergency contact, plus any health concerns they have or that may need attention during the night. They may also be referred to other agencies for services as needed.

Volunteers will handle setting up the facility each evening, preparing coffee, welcoming and registering guests, and at all times throughout the night at least one volunteer will be awake and available so that everyone will be safe. At 6 a.m., the lights go on and guests prepare to leave.

Depending on where the shelter is housed, companion dogs may be allowed in and provided a kennel crate in which they will sleep next to their owner.

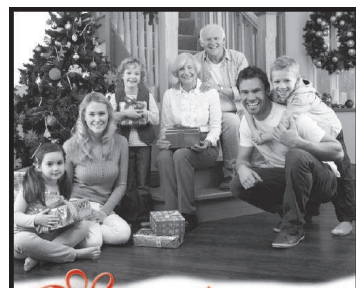
The next meeting for the board and volunteers is scheduled for Wednesday, December 28, 4 p.m., at Westside Church. For more information or to offer help, contact shelter co-chairs Lois Kaping at loiskaping@bendbroadband.com or Pastor Ron Gregg at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church at 541-549-5831.



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